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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [LI](#)  
SUBJECT: LIBERIA: SUPREME COURT REINSTATES SUSPENDED SENATE  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

REF: A. MONROVIA 619  
[1](#)B. MONROVIA 1049

[1](#)1. (U) The Supreme Court of Liberia issued an order December 18 calling for the immediate removal of Senator Lahai Lasannah as Acting Senate President Pro Tempore and the immediate reinstatement of Suspended Pro Tempore Isaac Nyenabo. The Senate suspended Nyenabo by simple majority vote on August 5 for "poor leadership" after a group of opposition Senators accused him of allowing the Legislature to be a puppet of the Executive Branch (ref A). The Supreme Court found that under the Liberian Constitution a Senator may be removed "for cause" by a two-thirds vote of the Senate, but that the Constitution provided no mechanism for a suspension.

[1](#)2. (U) Associate Supreme Court Justice Jamesetta Howard-Wolokolie issued a stay order in September 23 on the suspension, meaning that Isaac Nyenabo should have been reinstated immediately pending a final Supreme Court ruling on the matter. Lasannah ignored her order, against the advice of his attorneys, and refused to give up his Pro Tempore seat, arguing that the judgment was received too late to be placed on the agenda before recess and that a vote was necessary to reinstate Nyenabo after the Senate reconvenes on January 12. Lasannah's lawyers then abandoned him saying the case was becoming more political than legal so he had no representation at the Supreme Court hearing. Lasannah has asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its ruling given that he had no attorney during the deliberations, but the Supreme Court has refused.

[1](#)3. (SBU) COMMENT. Though Lasannah seems likely to pursue this case further, his supporters in the Senate appear to have rallied behind Nyenabo and are becoming more vocal about his right to lead. Nyenabo represented the Senate as Pro Tempore at the December 18 International Contact Group on Liberia meeting. Several Senators present made a point to refer to him as "President of the Senate" to publicly show their support for him. Lasannah was invited to the meeting as Acting Pro Tempore but failed to attend. If the dispute continues through the opening of the new session, pressing legislation like the electoral threshold review could be delayed (ref B). END COMMENT.  
THOMAS-GREENFIELD